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# Outcasts of the Island

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Britain's two civilian intelligence services are comparatively modest, in keeping with a country that has lost its empire and is about to fall behind Spain in per capita income. MI5, run from the Home Office, keeps an eye on spies in Britain and hasn't made much of a splash since the Heath government threw out 105 alleged Soviet agents in 1971. The Secret Intelligence Service or SIS, more or less controlled by the Foreign Office, does the spying abroad. Lacking both the global ambitions and material resources of the CIA, it contented itself with an occasional coup in the minor sheikdoms. Its political judgments tend to be no wiser than those of most other agencies, although it is not clear whether it was SIS, the Israeli Mossad, or the CIA that had the inspired idea of replacing Milton Obote with Idi Amin in Uganda.

Once upon a time, SIS dabbled in domestic politics with the same zest as the CIA. Half a century ago, the agency then known as MI6 forged a letter from the Kremlin urging the miniscule British Communist Party on to sabotage, enlisted the cooperation of Foreign Office and MI5 mandarins to publicize the fake in complaisant British dailies, and thus helped crush the first Labour government of Ramsay MacDonald. Nowadays, however, the invisible government here can only look with envy on the CIA's successful attempt, for example, to intervene in Chilean politics.

But the two British agencies are also skilled bureaucracies which still know how to deal with anyone threatening their reduced existence. If the Lion has only a few teeth left, it still has a rabid bite. It is against this background that the deportation of Philip Agee and Mark Hosenball, and the revival of the discredited Section Two of the Official Secrets Act against a pair of British writers, can best be understood.

Hosenball is an amiable twenty-five-year-old American of vaguely leftist sentiments who became entranced with Britain on a schoolboy exchange here. After some studies at Trinity College in Dublin, he drifted into journalism and began to write for *Time Out*. This is a youthful, slick, and successful weekly, an entertainment guide with left-leaning political pieces up front and personal ads from lonely souls in the back. It enjoys drawing attention to intelligence fiascos, and Hosenball enthusiastically joined in.

But his real sin appears to have been committed not in *Time Out* but in the pilot issue of a grimmer and coarser left journal, *The Leveller*. There Hosenball wrote an article asserting that a pair of former student leaders had been secretly employed by SIS.

A British official familiar with Hosenball's dossier told me that "70 percent" of the reason for his deportation can be traced to the *Leveller* piece. What is said to have particularly enraged Century House, the South Bank SIS headquarters, was not that Hosenball had broken the pair's cover but that his targets were now either divorced from the agency or working at innocuous tasks. Hosenball, in other words, had fingered two persons who were currently innocent. This probably lies behind the ominous phrase in his deportation order, that Hosenball had prejudiced "the safety of servants of the Crown." In any event, the official told me that no espionage was involved in the case of either Hosenball or Agee.

Agee is forty-two and a very different sort. He appears, both from his book and in person, as a rather simple, self-righteous zealot who sees all issues in black and white. He seems to have believed literally what he was taught at a Jesuit high school in Tampa, labored earnestly at Notre Dame, and joined the CIA to crush infidel communism. He had difficulty, however, in adjusting to the agency's arguments on the need to employ the Devil's tools for God's work. So he left in 1969, determined to spread the word about the new devils he had discovered. It is unclear whether he has also found new gods. He settled in Britain, wrote his tedious but instructive book *Inside the Company*, and toured a leftist lecture circuit, naming many of

CIA—not to the British services. No one has established a connection between his activities and the assassination in 1975 of Richard Welch, the CIA station chief in Athens; but indignation over Welch's death helped provide an excuse to prise him loose from Britain.

Merlyn Rees, the British Home Office minister, has repeatedly told Parliament that there was no CIA pressure to throw out Agee. This was more or less literally true but also misleading. In fact, as James Angleton, the former chief of CIA's counterintelligence division, said in a television interview on the eve of Agee's deportation order, "We are somewhat displeased" that Britain had given Agee a "safe haven." As the knowledgeable British official put it to me, CIA pressure was "minimal." In other words, if Rees had been more scrupulously briefed by his civil servants, he should have told the Commons that there was some CIA pressure but that it did not amount to much.

Lumping Agee with Hosenball, however, did serve the purposes of British intelligence. It is always useful to do a favor for the more powerful American service. Moreover, the simultaneous deportation yoked the little-known Hosenball to the far more prominent Agee, who everybody knew was up to peculiar tricks.

The heart of the order against Agee said that he "has maintained regular contacts harmful to the security of the United Kingdom with foreign intelligence agents." In Whitehall, where the Home Office sits, the word was quickly passed to inquiring reporters that Agee,

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